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KANSAS CITY METRO AREA KICKS OFF NATIONWIDE DISCUSSION ON HEALTH CARE

Citizens' recommendations to be considered by Congress, White House

Washington, D.C. – The Kansas City metropolitan area will host the initial community dialogue on health care in America presented by the Citizens' Health Care Working Group. The community meeting will be held on **Tuesday, January 17, 2006**, from 9:00 am - 1:00 pm at The Kauffman Foundation, 4801 Rockhill Road, Kansas City, MO 64110. Kansas City based Swope Health Services and the Kansas Public Health Association are assisting in local recruitment. The meeting is free and open to the public, but registration is requested. Registration is available at www.citizenshealthcare.gov. (Press may contact Chic Smith directly for interviews and photo opportunities.)

"This is a wonderful opportunity for everyone in our community to be a part of a solution regarding health care," stated Dr. Kimber Richter, Chair of the Legislative Action and Issues Committee for the Kansas Public Health Association. "I'm delighted that our area was selected to participate and encourage everyone to take advantage of this opportunity to make your voices heard."

The community meeting will feature a multimedia presentation that provides information on the nation's health care system including problems related to cost, quality, and access to care. This will be followed by more focused discussions in small groups. Participants will share their ideas about how to improve the health care system. Barrett Hatches, President and CEO of Swope Health Services, states that "Swope is honored to assist the President, Congress and the Working Group by bringing the community together to discuss an important issue such as health care."

The Working Group, a nonpartisan group authorized by the Medicare Prescription Drug, Improvement and Modernization Act of 2003, is charged with listening to the views of the American people and developing recommendations for the President and Congress to provide U.S. citizens with "Health Care that Works for All Americans." The *Health Report to the American People*, was released in October and serves as a basis to engage the American people in a dialogue on health care access, cost and quality issues. The Working Group consists of 15 members --14 citizens of diverse backgrounds from across the country, and the Secretary of Health and Human Services.

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